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THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN LEAGUE

Mexican American Peace committee

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The Joint Mexican-American Peace Conference called by the American Union Against Militarism held its first full executive session at the Hotel Willard in Washington on Thursday, July 6, 1916, at ten o'clock.

Present: Dr. David Starr Jordan, Mr. Moorefield Storey, Mr. Paul U. Kellogg, Mr. Modesto C. Rolland, Mr. Luis Manuel Rojas, and Dr. Atl.

Voted that the Conference organize permanently as the Mexican-American Peace Committee.

Voted that the Committee should have power to fill vacancies temporarily or permanently in its membership as ocasion requires.

Voted that when the Committee adjourns it should adjourn to meet at the call of the chairman.

Voted that Mr. Moorefield Storey should act as chairman, Mr. Modesto C. Rolland as vice-chairman, Miss Crystal Eastman as secretary, and Mr. Manuel Carpio as assistant secretary.

Voted that the headquarters of the Committee for the present should be the Munsey Building, Washington, D. C.

Voted that the following statement should be given to the press, as agreed upon by the six members:

We believe that the American people should understand the sources of the Mexican revolution, the purposes which have guided it, the nature and causes of the disorders and crimes which have been incidentally associated with it, and the efforts of the *de facto* government to reduce disorder and to prevent atrocities.

We believe that the American people should also learn that the Mexican people are not an aggregation of irresponsible bands, but rather that Mexico has within herself all the elements of regeneration; that new institutions, free schools, land adjustments, coöperative municipalities, temperance legislation, encouragement to industry and thrift are springing up like fresh grass after a prairie fire. In more than half of the States and in more than half the territory of the remaining States, law and order reign, notably in the States of Yucatan, Jalisco, Michoacan, Vera Cruz, Sonora, Colima, Queretaro, Aguas Calientes, Tabasco, and the territories of Baja California and Tepic. The new land statutes of Yucatan have been thought out very thoroughly and the number of schools in that State is about 2,400 today, as against 200 two years ago.

It is to be borne in mind that the Mexican Revolution is in many respects parallel with the French Revolution, and that it was originally directed against similar social and political abuses: a proletariat without hope, practically confined to the soil, which was held in enormous estates obtained by various forms of privilege; a Church numbering many faithful priests, no doubt, but as a whole keeping the people in ignorance and wielding great political and financial power—in a word, the evils which necessarily follow tyrannical and corrupt government. Besides all this, Mexico, one of the richest lands in the world in

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natural resources, has been burdened by concessions of all kinds; oil-fields, mining, fisheries, railways, obtained by means which will not bear the light of day, so that its wealth, its opportunities have largely been sold to foreigners whose only interest in Mexico is that of exploiters.

In this connection the American people should be reminded that there is no warrant in International Law or in morals for the idea that it is the duty of any nation to assert by force of arms the privileges of its citizens domiciled in a foreign country. Our treaties guarantee them equal treatment with the actual citizen of the country in which they dwell or carry on business, but they do not involve the making of war for the benefit of individuals without regard to the conditions under which they may find themselves in trouble. The idea that military force must be at the service of exploiters is one which has borne the most serious consequences.

In short, we must remember that revolutions never move backward, and that the *regime* of Porfirio Diaz is henceforth as impossible for Mexico as that of Louis XV. would be for the France of to-day.

(Signed by the six members present.)

A meeting of the Mexican-American Peace Committee was held at the New Willard Hotel, Washington, D. C., on Saturday, July 8, 1916, at 10 a. m.

Present: Dr. Jordan, Mr. Kellogg, Mr. Rolland, Mr. Rojas, Dr. Atl

(Of the Committee).

Miss Eastman, Miss Wambaugh, Mr. Carpio, Mr. Steffens, Mr. Murray, Dr. Slaughter

The following statement, prepared by the American delegates as an introduction to the Mexican statement, was read, approved, and referred to the Mexican delegates to use as they should see fit.

"The American members of the 'unofficial' peace conference have asked their three Mexican *confrères* to prepare a statement interpreting the revolutionary cause. Without attempting to pass upon its details, we feel that the people of the United States will recognize that the statement is permeated with the earnestness, the sincerity, and the constructive idealism which those leading citizens of Mexico, who dropped their personal affairs in response to the call of emergency, have revealed throughout these conferences. We believe that these gentlemen, our friends and colleagues on this committee, are thoroughly representative of the leadership and purpose of the Revolutionary movement which has endured the strain of civil war and is slowly but surely building a new order of democracy and justice in our sister republic."

The following statement was unanimously adopted as expressing in general terms the purposes of the Committee:

1. To help bring about a new and constructive era of friendliness between the people of Mexico and the United States.

2. To stand ready to be of common service in the event of any further crises between our two governments.

3. To interpret, follow, and promote joint negotiations between the two governments with respect to border control and all other questions of public policy.

4. To promote a common understanding between the people of the two countries by means of exchange fellowships in universities and agricultural colleges; to encourage traveling exhibits; to spread information; and to exchange knowledge of the arts and inventions.

5. To promote coöperation between the corresponding economic, civic, and other professional bodies in Mexico and the United States, so that governmental regulation and coöperation will be parallelled by unofficial coöperation and mutual encouragement.

6. To conceive of our purpose in no narrow sense, but to welcome the expansion of this common work, as occasion offers, throughout the two countries.

The following statement, prepared by the Mexican delegates, was read, approved, and referred to the American delegates to use as they should see fit:

"Honest men, misled by much that has appeared in the press, have doubted the ability of the Mexican people to reorganize itself. Here are some concrete cases that demonstrate the potent virility of our people which is today proceeding resolutely to the conquest of a well-being to which it has an absolute right.

The Real Mexico.

When the First Chief had time, in Vera Cruz, to begin the reorganization of his government, even in the midst of battles, his first decree was one returning to the Indians the communal lands of which they had been dispossessed. In the various States agrarian laws are now establishing small land owners. Wherever necessary, land is condemned and purchased at its just value. Properties are being revalued and equitable taxes levied which will, in the future, prevent the formation of great holdings. Laws of this character are already in operation in the States of Yucatan, Guanajuato, Sonora, Vera Cruz, Jalisco, Michoacan, Colima, Zacatecas, Sinaloa, Quéretaro, Puebla, Hidalgo, and the territory of Tepic.

Municipal administration had been abolished by the dictators so that most of the communities had lost all political and economic importance. One of the first steps of the Revolution was the restoration of the free municipality. In nearly all the States, laws have now been passed re-establishing the local communities, and a general election for the councils has been called for the first Sunday of next September.

Laborers have acquired many social and economic gains; the larger proportion of the States have passed laws establishing a week of

forty-four hours and a day of eight hours, as well as laws regarding accidents, minimum wage, courts of conciliation and of arbitration, by means of which the workers may solve their difficulties. It has been enacted that children shall not work in factories before the age of sixteen; that women with child may have six weeks' leave with full salary, with reinstatement of their position. The right of free association is recognized as inalienable.

The law of divorce has been put in operation, and has produced a revolution in the public consciousness; in two years it has transformed the social condition of thousands of women who suffered from the Moorish slavery established by the Spaniards. In the very first month that the Revolution occupied the Capitol, more than 500 petitions for divorce were presented.

The Revolutionary Government has suppressed in many States the sale of alcoholic drinks. In a very short time the good results of this measure have become evident.

In the whole of the Republic, bull-fights and cock-fights have been supplanted by popular games, such as baseball, pelota, etc.

In each State there has developed an intense rivalry among the revolutionary chiefs to see who can organize the greatest number of schools. Those chiefs who are intelligent and instructed press on the schools through conviction, and those less instructed do it because the idea has been popularized that the school will save the country. The First Chief has sent to this country about 500 teachers to study modern pedagogy and school administration. Today there are in Mexico twenty times as many schools as in the last term of General Diaz. These schools were established during the worst periods of the armed conflict.

The economic condition of the teachers has been notably improved. The world does not know about all this, because periodicals say nothing when a thousand schools are inaugurated, but if a bandit assaults a train the press declares that the country is in anarchy.

The Revolution is giving new force to the laws of 1874 establishing the separation of Church and State and depriving the Catholic Church of its political character, and of its power to acquire land and property, leaving however, to individuals, their inalienable right to teach freely any religious creed.

Now that the pacification of the country is almost concluded, the army is being reorganized in order to make its functions compatible with democratic institutions, and to avoid the possibility that it may serve as the instrument of political groups, as the federal army served every dictatorship in turn, 80% of the public upheavals in Mexico during the past century having been due to military *coups*. Moreover, there actually exists in Mexico among civilians, and among a large proportion of even the military elements, a strong anti-militarist spirit; it is worthy of notice that the principal chiefs of the Revolution consider it a matter of personal gratification to be entitled armed citizens and not professional soldiers.

The Background of the Revolution and the Sources of Present Discord.

In order to explain the historical crisis through which Mexico is passing, the incidents which created it ought to be analyzed, for they show that the causes which jeopardized the harmony between Mexico and the United States still exist.

The Mexican nation has been a vast, rich field exploited by international capital in combination with the governments of Diaz and Huerta and the Clerical party, taking advantage of popular ignorance. International capital, often by the use of illegal methods, has got control of *70 per cent. of our national wealth.* All popular efforts to create a just social organization therefore, have always come in conflict with the great international interests backed by armed forces.

The great American interests have obtained possession of 30 per cent. of the wealth of Mexico, and they are the most active propagandists of intervention to prevent the hopes and plans of the Mexican revolution ending in triumph.

This conflict between the ambitions of international capital and the rights of the Mexican people constitutes the most powerful cause of disagreement between the two countries.

Lands: Before the reform law, nine-tenths of the real estate in the republic were in the hands of the Catholic Clergy.

The reform laws of President Juarez in 1859 endeavored to divide the land by prohibiting to the clergy and every kind of corporation the collective possession of the land; but later, by the help of the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, the land was again monopolized and more than two-thirds of the national territory was seized by a small group of privileged persons, native and foreign, and by individuals acting as agents of the Catholic Clergy, thus evading the intent of the law. These privileged persons obtained their lands at absurd prices in most of the States of the Republic, paying for them between two and seventeen centavos (one-half cent American gold) per hectare (two and a half acres), or by despoiling the rural population by means of military force imposed by the old Jefes Politicos, or by having recourse to judicial hugger-mugger.

During fifty years, every sentence pronounced by the courts in disputes regarding lands was given in favor of the monopolist and never in favor of the small proprietor.

The Revolution is endeavoring to rectify all these acts of injustice.

The monopoly of great estates left the most fertile lands unproductive. The great owners paid no taxes and the public expense fell upon the small holders.

Petroleum: This great resource has been exploited exclusively by English and American companies, especially by the Pierson Company of London, and by the Waters-Pierce Oil Company of New York.

The concessions granted by the administration of Diaz to the Pierson Company paralyzed completely the free development of oil

lands, even of those that might have been worked by their native possessors. The most important of these concessions consisted in according the Pierson Company the right that no other company should be allowed to exploit the land within three kilometers of the place where they had sunk a well. The Pierson Company obtained in addition the exclusive right to use the federal zones of all the east of the Republic, with the promise to deliver to the Government ten per cent. of the product they obtained. The Pierson Company took advantage of this to survey and ascertain the oil-bearing zones, and secretly to buy the land for a bagatelle from the Indians, thus evading the agreement which it had with the Government. At present no petroleum lands belong to Mexico. Foreign capitalists have acquired all the oil-bearing lands by deceiving the Indians or by taking advantage of the venality of local authorities. This national wealth flows silently to other countries without leaving any advantage to the Mexican people. It does not matter that it pays insignificant customs duties. The people are not able to obtain cheap petroleum to provide power for their own industries. Irrigation still awaits the coming of a cheap combustible. It is absurd that this should occur in the country which is *par excellence* the producer of the appropriate fuel.

MINES: The great foreign countries control immense mining regions, and exploit them under an absolutely exclusive régime paralyzing all other works that do not suit them, but which might be of public utility. Wages have always been so miserable that the laborers have only been able to vegetate.

Under the capitalistic policy that reigned during the dictatorship of Diaz, the old law that permitted the small miner to work his reduced holdings at his pleasure was replaced by the present law that favors only the great enterprises.

WATERS: Foreigners have obtained for their exclusive benefit falls and sources of water necessary for irrigation and the production of energy, and in many cases these have not been used in spite of their necessity to the rural population.

FINANCE: The bankers have carried on operations proper to usurers. They have speculated in lands, timber, and every kind of privilege. The health of Porfirio Diaz had a profound influence on the markets. Mexican finances functioned on a basis of spoliation, and threatened to collapse with the fall of the dictator.

RAILROADS: All the construction of railroads in the Republic has been covered by concessions for a term of 99 years and by heavy subventions. The Mexican nation has expended more than two hundred millions of pesos in these constructions, and afterwards, thanks to the skillful combinations carried out to consolidate the railways, the investment was overcapitalized, and the government was compelled to guarantee the security of an enormous debt, which places Mexico today in a position to lose its whole investment and to leave the railroads in the hands of capitalists who impose such tariffs as please them.

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CARRANZA: THE MAN AND HIS TASK.

In this great reconstructive movement, Carranza represents the largest effort toward the realization of popular ideals and toward the practical solution of the problem of Mexico.

The action of Carranza against the dictatorship of General Huerta was legal, in accordance with the provision of Article 29 of the Mexican Constitution of 1857.

Carranza has succeeded, during the revolutionary period, in solidifying popular confidence in his personality and has slowly become the effective centre of national efforts.

The American people naturally desire that Mexican social reconstruction shall complete itself rapidly. But it should not escape their comprehension that the solution of the complicated problem of Mexico cannot be attained through simple desire, nor from the outside. The phenomena manifested in Mexico are in obedience to social laws whose action cannot be hurried.

Voted: That the Chair should appoint a committee consisting of one Mexican delegate and one American delegate to investigate the possibility of financing the work of the Committee. Dr. Jordan, Acting Chairman, appointed Dr. Atl and Mr. Storey to act on this committee.

The Secretary brought up the fact that if the Committee should undertake active work it would be impossible for her to serve as executive secretary of an active organization—The American Union Against Militarism—and also act efficiently as secretary of the Mexican-American Peace Committee. She suggested that a Secretary be appointed. The name of Miss Sarah Wambaugh was discussed as a possible secretary.

Voted: The Secretary should have power to appoint her successor, in consultation with the Chairman.

Voted: That the Mexican-American Peace Committee should hold its next session at 70 Fifth Avenue, New York, on Friday, July 14th, at four o'clock.

Voted: That Mr. Rolland and Mr. Kellogg should constitute an Executive Committee with power to act during the time between meetings of the full committee.

There being no further business, the Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

CRYSTAL EASTMAN, *Secretary.*